

WORSHIPPING A HOLY GOD

REVELATION 15:4

Moses' Experience of the Holy

Before the Exodus, Moses found himself on holy ground when he encountered the burning bush on Mount Horeb (Exodus 3). Later, Moses had another experience with the holiness of God that is not as well known.

After the Exodus, Moses was on the same mountain receiving the Law from God when he made an unusual request of God: "Please, show me Your glory" (Exodus 33:18). You might think that Moses had seen plenty in Egypt—the plagues, the Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea—but that wasn't enough. He wanted to see more; he wanted to see God's glory, His face. He didn't get to see the face of God, His full glory, but God gave him an approximate experience. He promised to pass by in front of Moses, shielding Moses' view with His hand, then remove His hand as He passed by so Moses could see His back.

It was a good thing Moses did not see the full glory of God, or he would have died. As it was, when he came down off the mountain, the people were afraid of him because his face shone. His face was aglow with the reflected glory of God (Exodus 34:29–30). He ultimately had to cover his face with a veil because no one would come near him otherwise (verse 33).

Even a partial revelation of the glory of God transformed Moses and was immediately visible to everyone around him.

Job's Experience of the Holy

After Job went through his own life-changing experience of suffering, he experienced a revelation of God that changed him even further. At the end of the book of Job, we read his response to what he learned about God: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5–6). Earlier he had said, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth" (Job 40:4).

Job found himself too unworthy even to speak in God's presence. Seeing the holiness and power of God renders those who see Him speechless.

Isaiah's Experience of the Holy

Isaiah's experience of the holy was perhaps the most dramatic of all who encountered God (Isaiah 6). God called Isaiah in the year that king Uzziah died, a great king in Israel who had reigned for 52 years. Uzziah served God faithfully until near the end of his reign when, in a moment of pride and arrogance, he usurped the role of priest in the temple which was an offense to God. As a result, Uzziah broke out in leprosy, which meant he had to be quarantined away from the people, where he died. When he died, the whole nation mourned because he had been a righteous king up until that final mistake at the end of his life.

During that year, as Isaiah was at the temple to seek the Lord's guidance for Israel in the absence of her king, he saw the Lord "sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). The seraphim who attended the Lord cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (verse 3). In response, Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of David Jeremiah, *Knowing the God You Worship: Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004). Page 1. Exported from [Logos Bible Software 4](#), 5:12 PM November 01, 2012.

unclean lips ... for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (verse 5). One of the seraphim then took a live coal from the altar and touched Isaiah’s lips and said, “... your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged” (verse 6).

In the Hebrew culture and language, repetition of words was used for emphasis (like Jesus saying, “Verily, verily” [KJV, or “truly, truly” NASB] when He wanted to emphasize what He was about to say). Triplicates were rare, and signified intense emphasis, as when the angels cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” We don’t find “loving, loving, loving” or “gracious, gracious, gracious” in the Bible, but we do find “holy, holy, holy”—the only attribute of God repeated three times for emphasis.

And Isaiah’s response was like everyone else’s—a profound sense of unworthiness. “Undone” means “disintegrated.” He lost all sense of his own wholeness in the presence of the holiness of God.

Paul’s Experience of the Holy

Saul of Tarsus (his name before becoming the apostle Paul) was traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus to find and persecute Christians (Acts 9:1–16; 22:1–21; 26:9–18). As he traveled, a bright light from heaven appeared and Paul fell to the ground in response. Though he didn’t realize it immediately, Paul was being confronted by the risen and living Christ in all His glory. Paul was temporarily blinded by the experience, but was ultimately converted to faith in Christ. When He saw the glory of the Person he had been persecuting, Paul succumbed to that glory with all his life and became the greatest of the apostles.

Paul’s encounter with the glory of God is perhaps the most life-changing instance recorded in Scripture.

John’s Experience of the Holy

When the apostle John was given the opportunity to look into heaven, he saw the enthroned Lord. In Revelation 1, John describes the awesome appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ and then says, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead” (verse 17). John’s experience was not unlike the experience of others when they saw the glory of God.

Rudolph Otto was right! The consistent response to being in the presence of the holiness of God is an immediate realization of one’s own unworthiness. Job put his hand over his mouth; Isaiah saw his sinfulness; Saul fell to the ground; John fell down as if he were dead. After seeing these responses, I am more sure than ever that none of us has really experienced the holiness of God. We humans—including we who are Christians—are a profane people. If we ever saw our holy God, we would know it like never before.

What should our response be to what we learn from these men’s experiences with the holiness of God?

Our Experience of the Holy

The more clearly we understand God’s holiness, the more the following will be true of us.

We Will See O _____ as We Really Are

The more we see of God’s holiness, the more we see of our “un-holiness”—our own “creatureliness.” Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The more we understand God’s holiness, the more we will agree that we have fallen short of it. As long as we fall short, we can never expect to have fellowship with God on the basis of our own lives. The best we can offer Him is the equivalent of “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). This is the bad news we have to understand before the good news of the Gospel makes sense. My father, who was a preacher, used to say when I was growing up, “Before you can get some people saved,

David Jeremiah, *Knowing the God You Worship: Study Guide* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004). Page 2. Exported from [Logos Bible Software 4](#), 5:12 PM November 01, 2012.

you have to get them 'un-saved.' " He meant, of course, that they have to see their own unrighteousness before they can see their need for a Savior. God's holiness is the only standard for what is acceptable to Him, and we cannot achieve that standard on our own.

We Will U_____ the Cross

Once we see who we are compared to who God is, we understand the cross of Christ.

Do we truly understand the Cross as well as we should? God the Father killed His own Son! Why did He do that? It all has to do with holiness. If we don't understand holiness, we won't understand the Cross.

Christ came into the world to provide access for sinful people to a holy God. If Christ had not died for our "un-holiness," we would have remained in our sins and been barred forever from the presence of a holy God. We know our sins were actually upon Christ because God, in His holiness, could not even look upon His own Son on the cross who now carried upon Himself the sins of the world. He forsook His own Son in order that we might be made holy in Christ.

What Christ accomplished on the cross was to weave a new suit of clothes for you and me to wear that we might be clothed with His own holiness. So now, when God looks at me, He does not see my sin but the holiness of His Son in which I am clothed. That is the purpose of the Cross—to provide that which the holiness of God demanded. God took the life of His own Son instead of our lives, and gave us Christ's righteousness in exchange.

We Will W_____ Him

There is a definite connection between seeing God's holiness and worship (Psalm 30:4; 89:7; 99:5). Worship is more a verb than a noun, something we actively accomplish, not passively observe. All the biblical characters cited earlier in this lesson worshipped God when they saw His holiness. But when we see God's holiness, we do more than participate in worship on Sunday. Our whole life becomes an act of worship. Our money, our jobs, our hobbies, our recreation—everything becomes an offering of worship to Him (Romans 12:1).

We Will C_____ the Habit of Holiness

When we see God's holiness, we are motivated to become holy ourselves. First Peter says in several ways that because God is holy, we likewise ought to be holy (1:15; 2:5, 9). We cannot be as holy as God, but we are to set ourselves apart from this world as He is set apart; as He is holy, we are to be holy. There used to be a doctrine in the Christian church in America called "separation," which emphasized the believer's separateness from the world. That can easily become a kind of legalism, but the idea was right. We are to be holy unto the Lord, set apart from the world

We W_____ Be Like Him

When we see God's holiness, it makes us long for the day when we will be like Him. Even though we will never be as holy as Christ in this life, the day is coming when "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). We will become as beautiful as Christ Himself, beauty being defined as the absence of sin and therefore the reality of holiness.

Are you looking forward to the day when you will see Christ and be like Him? That all begins with seeing your need for His Cross, your need to swap your "un-holiness" for His holiness. That is a step you can take today by putting your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.